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WHERE ARE WE GOING AND WHY?

Radio talk by C. B. Smith, Assistant Director, Extension Service, delivered in the Department period of the National Farm and Home Hour, November 2, 1935, and broadcast by NBC and a network of 50 associated radio stations.

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We hear much these days about youth organizations, what youth thinks and what youth wants. Youth meetings are called and speeches made and resolutions adopted, but not much happens beyond the meetings and the speeches. Four-H club work is a youth organization that is a going concern -- a youth organization that knows what it wants to do, where it is going, and why, and is on its way; a youth organization that is resulting in better farming, better rural homes, a larger cultural and social life, a more understanding rural youth.

In the United States these 4-H rural youth organizations are sponsored by Federal, State, and county governments and farmers cooperating. The Extension Service of the Federal Department of Agriculture, the State and Territorial agricultural colleges, county governments and farmers themselves are chiefly responsible for their promotion and guidance. There are 4-H clubs in practically every rural county in the United States and many clubs in Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and a number of other countries beyond the seas.

These clubs are educational, vocational, social, recreational, and character-building clubs. There are about 55,000 of these clubs in the United States alone, with an annual membership in the regular and auxiliary clubs of around 953,000 youth 10 to 24 years of age. Over 320,000 of this number, or nearly one-third, are 15 to 24 years of age. These clubs are made up of both rural boys and rural girls. Membership is wholly voluntary. The price of admission to these clubs is that each boy or girl who joins shall aid government and farmers in putting on a demonstration of the better way in agriculture or rural home making, or do some other worthwhile piece of work.

The objective of 4-H club work, stated in brief form, is to promote efficiency in farming and home making in this country, teach youth the significance of agriculture in the national economy, make them understand the place of farming and the home in life, give them a useful part of the world's work to do, and so conduct the work of growing crops and livestock and making homes that youth may enjoy the undertaking and grow mentally, socially, and spiritually in the work.

Membership on the average in these clubs extends over a period of about two and three-fourths years. About a third of the membership, however, remain in 4-H club work 3 to 6 years or longer. The clubs largely organize and conduct their own meetings under the sponsorship of an adult, usually an outstanding farm man or woman. There are more than 90,000 farm men and women giving help in this work. The clubs are guided in their demonstration work by about 7000 technically-trained agents of the Government and the 90,000 volunteer local leaders. Business men's organi-

zations, schools, churches, etc., also cooperate with government in promoting 4-H club work.

Where is 4-H club work going? Four-H club work will continue to hold fast to the things in the club program that have built it up to where it is. We are going on doing concrete, tangible, worth-while things in agriculture and home economics in 4-H club work as a starting point, and with these things as a background we are going to continue to pledge our heads to clearer thinking, our hearts to greater loyalty, our hands to larger service, and our health to better living.

We are going to broaden and strengthen our program with the older youth, giving them more varied, more significant pieces of work to do. They are to have a larger part in making up their club program themselves, more matters relating to their particular interests at that age: things that will help them develop themselves and better understand others, will be an increasing part of the 4-H club program. Projects in farm management that involve a broad outlook on economic conditions here and abroad; partnership relationships in farming; the use of finance and credit; forums for the discussion of civic and social matters, family relationships, community problems, personality development, a larger conception of what is for the common good, a philosophy of rural life. Promotion of the cultural and artistic side of life also will be a part of the 4-H club program as rapidly as it can be done constructively and helpfully.

Nature appreciation, through hikes in field and woods, to observe and study plants and animals, birds and insects, rocks and soil, are steadily increasing in all stages of 4-H club work and will continue to increase as the work goes on.

It is the intent of 4-H club work to continue to train the eye to see, train the hand to work, train the mind to perceive truth and beauty, and train the tongue and pen of youth to express these things in speech and writing in their clubs and reports, so that, in the language of Uncle Henry Wallace, they may educate themselves and become strong, clear-headed men and women.

Through additional funds voted by Congress and State Legislatures this past year, it is anticipated that around 1000 additional extension agents and assistant agents in 1936 will be placed in counties, in cooperation with farmers who bear part of the expense of club work. This increase in the extension staff should result in an increase of around 50,000 new members in 4-H clubs each year for the next 4 or 5 years, and an ultimate membership of at least a million and a half of rural youth each year.

With government and farmers behind this movement, with churches, business organizations, bankers, supporting it; with rural youth itself finding in the work something constructive, stimulating, broadening, educational, spiritual, and satisfying, this great rural youth movement is going on to still larger membership, still greater accomplishment. It has a program. It is accomplishing something. It meets a vital need of rural youth. It is educational and character-building, and that is why it is growing; that is why it is going somewhere.